

DISILLUSIONED

By Mildred Caroline Goodridge.

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"Mary looks old and worn," said John Strickland to his brother, Ephraim.

"Should think she would!" retorted Eph. "Say, John, this has been an



Then He Started and Stared Through an Open Window.

imposition—our family landing down on you this way.

"Well, you're welcome, aren't you?" demanded John.

"Your wife has surely made it so—dear woman! She's a prize, a jewel, but to harbor and work out her life for her husband's folks—no more of that! We're going home tomorrow."

John said nothing, stalking away.

He was in a cross mood. It was true that Mary looked old and worn. A true-hearted, loyal little woman, she had set herself at work to give her visitors the time of their lives. They were John's relatives and nothing was too good for them.

So no wonder that she looked tired and faded. For nearly three weeks she had hardly found time to change her dress daytimes. As to hair frills—none of that, surely! She had ignored "fixing up," of necessity, until she had appeared almost homely to John.

And that afternoon something crossgrained had hit John—hard. He had just been noticing the tired but smiling face of his wife, when an automobile sped by. It contained a chauffeur and two others. The others were Mr. and Mrs. Alison.

They were old residents of the town, but had left five years previous to live in the city. Now they were coming back to the old Booth homestead. John Strickland, peering past a lilac bush, noticed Cy Alison, smartly dressed and of prim dignity, seated beside his wife—she that had been Myra Booth.

John stared. He had not seen Mrs. Alison for over five years. She had been his first flame. She had treated him pretty mean in discarding after encouraging him. John had got all over that calf love speedily, however. Just now, though, a queer thrill pervaded him.

"Why, she looks as young—yes, younger than when I last saw her!" he was forced to ejaculate.

Certainly, at a distance, Mrs. Alison was a vivid contrast to Mary Strickland. There was a vivid color in her cheeks as she smiled, her white, even teeth reminded of pearls. Her hair was tastefully arranged, her figure made up to the perfect outline of a dressmaker's model.

"I might have had her once, if I'd set out strong enough to win her," mused John. "Her husband looks as useless and ninny-like as usual. And they say she got a hundred thousand